

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the application and consideration and entry of this paper are respectfully requested in view of the herein remarks, which place the application in condition for allowance.

The instant After-Final Amendment is being made to facilitate prosecution of the application and does not require a further search. Therefore, Applicant's attorneys respectfully request that the instant Amendment be entered.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Initially, the Examiner is thanked for indicating that claims 13, 24, and 28 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-28 are currently pending in this application and are rejected in the Office Action mailed on November 23, 2007. By this amendment, claims 1 and 16 are amended, and claims 2-4 and 17-28 are canceled. Support of the amendments can be found throughout the Specification as originally filed, for example, in paragraphs [0037] – [0041]. No new subject matter is introduced by way of these amendments.

Although the Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's objections, claim 1 has been amended to further prosecution. Changes made to the claims are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 101, § 102, § 103, or § 112. Rather, these changes are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicant is entitled.

II. THE REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

In paragraph 2 of the Office Action mailed on November 23, 2007, claims 1-12, 14-23 and 25-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,695,031 to Kurita et al. ("Kurita"). The rejections are traversed for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1, are presently amended, recites, *inter alia*:

A conveyor idler including a drum having an outer surface and an inner surface, [and] a locking housing...the locking housing having circumferentially spaced cages for the locking members to ensure the circumferential spacing between the locking members does not vary.
(Emphasis added).

As understood by Applicant's Attorney, Kurita discloses a one-way clutch for transmitting the rotation of a driving member to a driven member. (*Kurita*, column 1, lines 4-6). When the driven member begins to rotate faster than the driving member, the clutch disengages and the driven member is allowed to freewheel. (*Id.*, column 1, lines 42-44).

To accomplish this, Kurita provides for a plurality of roller elements arranged between an inner ring and an outer ring of the clutch, the roller elements contained within wedge shaped spaces between the inner and outer rings. Springs within the wedge shaped spaces urge the roller elements to displace circumferentially into the narrow portion of the wedge shaped space, locking the inner ring to the outer ring (*Id.*, column 2, lines 20-26). Different springs having different spring constants are used to ensure the rolling elements are displaced circumferentially to reliably lock the inner ring to the outer ring.

Thus engaged, the inner, driven ring and outer, driving ring both rotate at the same speed. Under certain circumstances, the inner driven ring may rotate faster than the outer driving ring. In this event, the clutch disengages by overcoming the spring force provided by the springs

located within the wedge shaped space, allowing the roller elements to move circumferentially toward the wide ends of the wedge shaped spaces. (*Id.*, column 3, lines 19-32.) (Emphasis added).

Thus, the circumferential position of the roller elements of Kurita, either in the narrower ends of the wedge shaped spaces or in the wider ends of the wedge shaped spaces, determines if the clutch is engaged or disengaged. Kurita relies on the roller elements to have some circumferential movement in order to engage or disengage the clutch.

In contrast, the instant invention provides locking members within cages arranged around the circumference of a locking housing. In the Office Action, the instant locking members are characterized as corresponding to the roller elements of Kurita. The locking members' axes are parallel to the axis of the locking member as illustrated, at least, in Figures 2-4. As recited in the instant application, "The rollers 38 can rotate within their cages 36 and can also move radially within their cages 36 as can be seen in Figs 3 and 4." (The instant application published as US 2006/0137958, "the Instant Application"). Independent claim 1 as amended further recites, "...the locking housing [has] circumferentially spaced cages for the locking members to ensure the circumferential spacing between the locking members does not vary." (Emphasis added).

In the Office Action, the Examiner generally agrees that Kurita is directed to the transmission of movement from the outer ring to the inner ring, while the instant invention is directed to preventing motion in one direction. The Office Action relies on alleged similarities in structure for support of the rejection. In numbered paragraph 2, page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts in part, "...all the structure required by the claims is shown because the structure of Kurita et al. would operate in exactly the same fashion as the structure of the present invention when the shaft is not rotating." When the shaft of Kurita et al. is not rotating, the

springs urge the rolling elements to displace circumferentially into the narrow ends of the wedge like space. However, at no time does the instant invention rely on any circumferential displacement of the rollers. The instant invention, contrary to Kurita, relies on the circumferential position of the locking members to remain fixed, while Kurita teaches the necessity of circumferential movement of the roller elements in order to practice the invention.

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is believed that revised independent claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the relied upon portions of Kurita. Claims 5-16, which depend from claim 1, are allowable as well.

Statements appearing above with respect to the disclosure in the cited reference represent the opinions of the Applicant's attorney and, in the event that the Examiner disagrees with any such opinions, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner specifically indicate those portions the respective reference providing the basis for a contrary view.

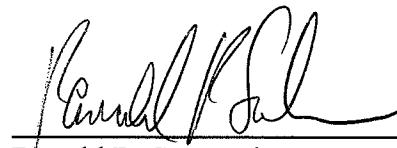
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all of the claims in this application are patentable over the prior art, and an early and favorable consideration thereof is solicited.

Please charge any fees incurred by reason of this response and not paid herewith to Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

Respectfully submitted,
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